CHAPTER IV

EFFICIENCY THROUGH CHANGE OF PITCH

Speech is simply a modified form of singing: the principal difference being in the fact that in singing the vowel sounds are prolonged and the intervals are short, whereas in speech the words are uttered in what may be called "staccato" tones, the vowels not being specially prolonged and the intervals between the words being more distinct. The fact that in singing we have a larger range of tones does not properly distinguish it from ordinary speech. In speech we have likewise a variation of tones, and even in ordinary conversation there is a difference of from three to six semi-tones, as I have found in my investigations, and in some persons the range is as high as one octave.

—WILLIAM SCHEPPEGRELL, *Popular Science Monthly.*

By pitch, as everyone knows, we mean the relative position of a vocal tone—as, high, medium, low, or any variation between. In public speech we apply it not only to a single utterance, as an exclamation or a monosyllable (*Oh!* or *the*) but to any group of syllables, words, and even sentences that may be spoken in a single tone. This distinction it is important to keep in mind, for the efficient speaker not only changes the pitch of successive syllables (see Chapter VII, "Efficiency through Inflection"), but gives a different pitch to different parts, or word-groups, of successive sentences. It is this phase of the subject which we are considering in this chapter.

Every Change in the Thought Demands a Change in the Voice-Pitch

Whether the speaker follows the rule consciously, unconsciously, or subconsciously, this is the logical basis upon which all good voice variation is made, yet this law is violated more often than any other by *public* speakers. A criminal may disregard a law of the state without detection and punishment, but the speaker who violates this regulation suffers its penalty at once in his loss of effectiveness, while his innocent hearers must endure

the monotony—for monotony is not only a sin of the perpetrator, as we have shown, but a plague on the victims as well.

Change of pitch is a stumbling block for almost all beginners, and for many experienced speakers also. This is especially true when the words of the speech have been memorized.

If you wish to hear how pitch-monotony sounds, strike the same note on the piano over and over again. You have in your speaking voice a range of pitch from high to low, with a great many shades between the extremes. With all these notes available there is no excuse for offending the ears and taste of your audience by continually using the one note. True, the reiteration of the same tone in music—as in pedal point on an organ composition—may be made the foundation of beauty, for the harmony weaving about that one basic tone produces a consistent, insistent quality not felt in pure variety of chord sequences. In like manner the intoning voice in a ritual may—though it rarely does—possess a solemn beauty. But the public speaker should shun the monotone as he would a pestilence.

Continual Change of Pitch is Nature's Highest Method

In our search for the principles of efficiency we must continually go back to nature. Listen—really listen—to the birds sing. Which of these feathered tribes are most pleasing in their vocal efforts: those whose voices, though sweet, have little or no range, or those that, like the canary, the lark, and the nightingale, not only possess a considerable range but utter their notes in continual variety of combinations? Even a sweet-toned chirp, when reiterated without change, may grow maddening to the enforced listener.

The little child seldom speaks in a monotonous pitch. Observe the conversations of little folk that you hear on the street or in the home, and note the continual changes of pitch. The unconscious speech of most adults is likewise full of pleasing variations.

Imagine someone speaking the following, and consider if the effect would not be just about as indicated. Remember, we are not now discussing the inflection of single words, but the general pitch in which phrases are spoken.

(High pitch) “I’d like to leave for my vacation tomorrow,—(lower) still, I have so much to do. (Higher) Yet I suppose if I wait until I have time I’ll never go.”

Repeat this, first in the pitches indicated, and then all in the one pitch, as many speakers would. Observe the difference in naturalness of effect.

The following exercise should be spoken in a purely conversational tone, with numerous changes of pitch. Practise it until your delivery would cause a stranger in the next room to think you were discussing an actual incident with a friend, instead of delivering a memorized monologue. If you are in doubt about the effect you have secured, repeat it to a friend and ask him if it sounds like memorized words. If it does, it is wrong.

A SIMILAR CASE

Jack, I hear you’ve gone and done it.—Yes, I know; most fellows will; went and tried it once myself, sir, though you see I’m single still. And you met her—did you tell me—down at Newport, last July, and resolved to ask the question at a *soirée?* So did I.

I suppose you left the ball-room, with its music and its light; for they say love’s flame is brightest in the darkness of the night. Well, you walked along together, overhead the starlit sky; and I’ll bet—old man, confess it—you were frightened. So was I.

So you strolled along the terrace, saw the summer moonlight pour all its radiance on the waters, as they rippled on the shore, till at length you gathered courage, when you saw that none was nigh—did you draw her close and tell her that you loved her? So did I.

Well, I needn’t ask you further, and I’m sure I wish you joy. Think I’ll wander down and see you when you’re married—eh, my boy? When the honeymoon is over and you’re settled down, we’ll try —What? the deuce you say! Rejected—you rejected? So was I.—*Anonymous.*

The necessity for changing pitch is so self-evident that it should be grasped and applied immediately. However, it requires patient drill to free yourself from monotony of pitch.

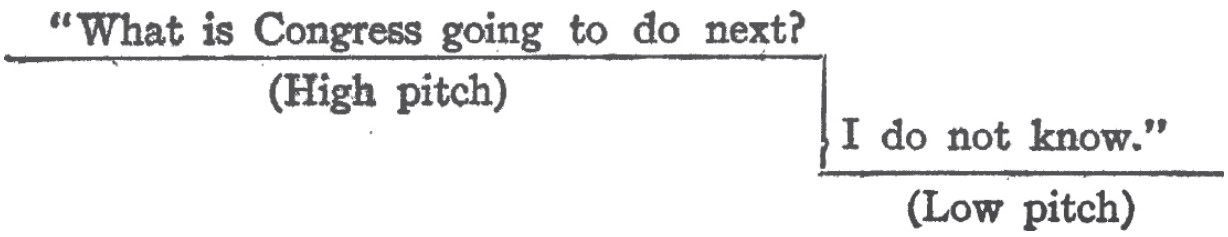
In natural conversation you think of an idea first, and then find words to express it. In memorized speeches you are liable to speak the words, and then think what they mean—and many speakers seem to trouble very little even about that. Is it any wonder that reversing the process should reverse the result? Get back to nature in your methods of expression.

Read the following selection in a nonchalant manner, never pausing to think what the words really mean. Try it again, carefully studying the thought you have assimilated. Believe the idea, desire to express it effectively, and imagine an audience before you. Look them earnestly in the face and repeat this truth. If you follow directions, you will note that you have made many changes of pitch after several readings.

It is not work that kills men; it is worry. Work is healthy; you can hardly put more upon a man than he can bear. Worry is rust upon the blade. It is not the revolution that destroys the machinery but the friction.—HENRY WARD BEECHER.

Change of Pitch Produces Emphasis

This is a highly important statement. Variety in pitch maintains the hearer's interest, but one of the surest ways to compel attention—to secure unusual emphasis—is to change the pitch of your voice suddenly and in a marked degree. A great contrast always arouses attention. White shows whiter against black; a cannon roars louder in the Sahara silence than in the Chicago hurly burly—these are simple illustrations of the power of contrast.



By such sudden change of pitch during a sermon Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis recently achieved great emphasis and suggested the gravity of the question he had raised.

The foregoing order of pitch-change might be reversed with equally good effect, though with a slight change in seriousness—either method produces emphasis when used intelligently, that is, with a common-sense appreciation of the sort of emphasis to be attained.

In attempting these contrasts of pitch it is important to avoid unpleasant extremes. Most speakers pitch their voices too high. One of the secrets of Mr. Bryan's eloquence is his low, bell-like voice. Shakespeare said that a soft, gentle, low voice was "an excellent thing in woman;" it is no less so in man, for a voice need not be blatant to be powerful,—and *must* not be, to be pleasing.

In closing, let us emphasize anew the importance of using variety of pitch. You sing up and down the scale, first touching one note and then another above or below it. Do likewise in speaking.

Thought and individual taste must generally be your guide as to where to use a low, a moderate, or a high pitch.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Name two methods of destroying monotony and gaining force in speaking.

2. Why is a continual change of pitch necessary in speaking?

3. Notice your habitual tones in speaking. Are they too high to be pleasant?

4. Do we express the following thoughts and emotions in a low or a high pitch? Which may be expressed in either high or low pitch? Excitement. Victory. Defeat. Sorrow. Love. Earnestness. Fear.

5. How would you naturally vary the pitch in introducing an explanatory or parenthetical expression like the following:

He started—*that is, he made preparations to start*—on September third.

6. Speak the following lines with as marked variations in pitch as your interpretation of the sense may dictate. Try each line in two different ways.

Which, in each instance, is the more effective—and why?

What have I to gain from you? Nothing.

To engage our nation in such a compact would be an infamy.

Note: In the foregoing sentence, experiment as to where the change in pitch would better be made.

Once the flowers distilled their fragrance here, but now see the devastations of war.

He had reckoned without one prime factor—his conscience.

7. Make a diagram of a conversation you have heard, showing where high and low pitches were used. Were these changes in pitch advisable? Why or why not?

8. Read the selections on pages 34, 35, 36, 37 and 38, paying careful attention to the changes in pitch. Reread, substituting low pitch for high, and vice versa.

Selections for Practise

Note: In the following selections, those passages that may best be delivered in a moderate pitch are printed in ordinary (roman) type. Those which may be rendered in a high pitch—do not make the mistake of raising the voice too high—are printed *in italics*. Those which might well be spoken in a low pitch are printed in *CAPITALS*.

These arrangements, however, are merely suggestive—we cannot make it strong enough that you must use your own judgment in interpreting a selection. Before doing so, however, it is well to practise these passages as they are marked.

Yes, all men labor. RUFUS CHOATE AND DANIEL WEBSTER labor, say the critics. But every man who reads of the labor question knows that it means the movement of the men that earn their living with their hands; *THAT ARE EMPLOYED, AND PAID WAGES: are gathered under roofs of factories, sent out on farms, sent out on ships, gathered on the walls.* In popular acceptation, the working class means the men that work with their hands, for wages, so many hours a day, employed by great capitalists; that work for everybody else. Why do we move for this class? "*Why,*" asks a critic, "*don't you move FOR ALL WORKINGMEN?" BECAUSE, WHILE DANIEL WEBSTER GETS FORTY THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR ARGUING THE MEXICAN CLAIMS, there is no need of*

anybody's moving for him. BECAUSE, WHILE RUFUS CHOATE GETS FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR MAKING ONE ARGUMENT TO A JURY, there is no need of moving for him, or for the men that work with their brains,—that do highly disciplined and skilled labor, invent, and write books. The reason why the Labor movement confines itself to a single class is because that class of work *DOES NOT GET PAID, does not get protection. MENTAL LABOR is adequately paid,* and *MORE THAN ADEQUATELY protected. IT CAN SHIFT ITS CHANNELS; it can vary according to the supply and demand.*

IF A MAN FAILS AS A MINISTER, why, he becomes a railway conductor. IF THAT DOESN'T SUIT HIM, he goes West, and becomes governor of a territory. AND IF HE FINDS HIMSELF INCAPABLE OF EITHER OF THESE POSITIONS, he comes home, and gets to be a city editor. He varies his occupation as he pleases, and doesn't need protection. *BUT THE GREAT MASS, CHAINED TO A TRADE, DOOMED TO BE GROUND UP IN THE MILL OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND, THAT WORK SO MANY HOURS A DAY, AND MUST RUN IN THE GREAT RUTS OF BUSINESS,—they are the men whose inadequate protection, whose unfair share of the general product, claims a movement in their behalf.*

—WENDELL PHILLIPS.

KNOWING THE PRICE WE MUST PAY, THE SACRIFICE WE MUST MAKE, THE BURDENS WE MUST CARRY, THE ASSAULTS WE MUST ENDURE—KNOWING FULL WELL THE COST—yet we enlist, and we enlist for the war. FOR WE KNOW THE JUSTICE OF OUR CAUSE, and we know, too, its certain triumph.

NOT RELUCTANTLY THEN, but eagerly, not with *faint hearts BUT STRONG, do we now advance upon the enemies of the people. FOR THE CALL THAT COMES TO US is the call that came to our fathers.* As they responded so shall we.

"HE HATH SOUNDED FORTH A TRUMPET that shall never call retreat.
HE IS SIFTING OUT THE HEARTS OF MEN before His judgment seat.
OH, BE SWIFT OUR SOULS TO ANSWER HIM, BE JUBILANT OUR FEET,
Our God is marching on."

—ALBERT J. BEVERIDGE.

Remember that two sentences, or two parts of the same sentence, which contain changes of thought, cannot possibly be given effectively in the same key. Let us repeat, every big change of thought requires a big change of pitch. What the beginning student will think are big changes of pitch will be monotonously alike. Learn to speak some thoughts in a very high tone—others in a *very, very* low tone. *DEVELOP RANGE.* It is almost impossible to use too much of it.

HAPPY AM I THAT THIS MISSION HAS BROUGHT MY FEET AT LAST TO PRESS NEW ENGLAND'S HISTORIC SOIL and my eyes to the knowledge of her beauty and her thrift. Here within touch of Plymouth Rock and Bunker Hill—*WHERE WEBSTER THUNDERED and Longfellow sang, Emerson thought AND CHANNING PREACHED—HERE IN THE CRADLE OF AMERICAN LETTERS and almost of American liberty,* I hasten to make the obeisance that every American owes New England when first he stands uncovered in her mighty presence. *Strange*

apparition! This stern and unique figure—carved from the ocean and the wilderness—its majesty kindling and growing amid the storms of winter and of wars—until at last the gloom was broken, *ITS BEAUTY DISCLOSED IN THE SUNSHINE, and the heroic workers rested at its base*—while startled kings and emperors gazed and marveled that from the rude touch of this handful cast on a bleak and unknown shore should have come the *embodied genius of human government AND THE PERFECTED MODEL OF HUMAN LIBERTY!* God bless the memory of those immortal workers, and prosper the fortunes of their living sons—and perpetuate the inspiration of their handiwork.....

Far to the South, Mr. President, separated from this section by a line—*once defined in irrepressible difference, once traced in fratricidal blood, AND NOW, THANK GOD, BUT A VANISHING SHADOW—lies the fairest and richest domain of this earth. It is the home of a brave and hospitable people. THERE IS CENTERED ALL THAT CAN PLEASE OR PROSPER HUMANKIND. A PERFECT CLIMATE ABOVE a fertile soil* yields to the husbandman every product of the temperate zone.

There, by night *the cotton whitens beneath the stars,* and by day *THE WHEAT LOCKS THE SUNSHINE IN ITS BEARDED SHEAF.* In the same field the clover steals the fragrance of the wind, and tobacco catches the quick aroma of the rains. *THERE ARE MOUNTAINS STORED WITH EXHAUSTLESS TREASURES: forests—vast and primeval; and* rivers that, *tumbling or loitering, run wanton to the sea.* Of the three essential items of all industries—cotton, iron and wood—that region has easy control. *IN COTTON, a fixed monopoly—IN IRON, proven supremacy—IN TIMBER, the reserve supply of the Republic.* From this assured and permanent advantage, against which artificial conditions cannot much longer prevail, has grown an amazing system of industries. Not maintained by human contrivance of tariff or capital, afar off from the fullest and cheapest source of supply, but resting in divine assurance, within touch of field and mine and forest—not set amid costly farms from which competition has driven the farmer in despair, but amid cheap and sunny lands, rich with agriculture, to which neither season nor soil has set a limit—this system of industries is mounting to a splendor that shall dazzle and illumine the world. *THAT, SIR, is the picture and the promise of my home—A LAND BETTER AND FAIRER THAN I HAVE TOLD YOU, and yet but fit setting in its material excellence for the loyal and gentle quality of its citizenship.*

This hour little needs the *LOYALTY THAT IS LOYAL TO ONE SECTION and yet holds the other in enduring suspicion and estrangement.* Give us the *broad* and *perfect loyalty that loves and trusts GEORGIA* alike with *Massachusetts*—that knows no *SOUTH,* no *North,* no *EAST,* no *West,* but *endears with equal and patriotic love* every foot of our soil, every State of our Union.

A MIGHTY DUTY, SIR, AND A MIGHTY INSPIRATION impels every one of us to-night to lose in patriotic consecration WHATEVER ESTRANGES, WHATEVER DIVIDES.

WE, SIR, are Americans—AND WE STAND FOR HUMAN LIBERTY! The uplifting force of the American idea is under every throne on earth. *France, Brazil—THESE ARE OUR VICTORIES. To redeem the earth from kingcraft and oppression—THIS IS OUR MISSION! AND WE SHALL NOT FAIL.* God has sown in our soil the seed of His millennial harvest, and He will not lay the sickle to the ripening crop until His full and perfect day has come. *OUR HISTORY, SIR, has been a constant and expanding miracle, FROM PLYMOUTH ROCK AND JAMESTOWN,* all the way—aye, even

from the hour when from the voiceless and traceless ocean a new world rose to the sight of the inspired sailor. As we approach the fourth centennial of that stupendous day—when the old world will come to *marvel* and to *learn* amid our gathered treasures—let us resolvé to crown the miracles of our past with the spectacle of a Republic, *compact, united INDISSOLUBLE IN THE BONDS OF LOVE*—loving from the Lakes to the Gulf—the wounds of war healed in every heart as on every hill, *serene and resplendent AT THE SUMMIT OF HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT AND EARTHLY GLORY, blazing out the path and making clear the way up which all the nations of the earth must come in God's appointed time!*

—HENRY W. GRADY, *The Race Problem.*

. . . *I WOULD CALL HIM NAPOLEON,* but Napoleon made his way to empire *over broken oaths and through a sea of blood.* This man never broke his word. "No Retaliation" was his great motto and the rule of his life; *AND THE LAST WORDS UTTERED TO HIS SON IN FRANCE WERE THESE: "My boy, you will one day go back to Santo Domingo; forget that France murdered your father." I WOULD CALL HIM CROMWELL.* but Cromwell *was only a soldier, and the state he founded went down with him into his grave. I WOULD CALL HIM WASHINGTON,* but the great Virginian *held slaves. THIS MAN RISKED HIS EMPIRE rather than permit the slave-trade in the humblest village of his dominions.*

YOU THINK ME A FANATIC TO-NIGHT, for you read history, *not with your eyes, BUT WITH YOUR PREJUDICES.* But fifty years hence, when Truth gets a hearing, the Muse of History will put *PHOCION for the Greek,* and *BRUTUS for the Roman, HAMPDEN for England, LAFAYETTE for France,* choose *WASHINGTON as the bright, consummate flower of our EARLIER civilization, AND JOHN BROWN the ripe fruit of our NOONDAY,* then, dipping her pen in the sunlight, will write in the clear blue, above them all, the name of *THE SOLDIER, THE STATESMAN, THE MARTYR, TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE.*

—WENDELL PHILLIPS, *Toussaint l'Ouverture.*

Drill on the following selections for change of pitch: Beecher's "Abraham Lincoln," p. 76; Seward's "Irrepressible Conflict," p.67; Everett's "History of Liberty," p. 78; Grady's "The Race Problem," p. 36; and Beveridge's "Pass Prosperity Around," p. 470.